



On Tuesday May 23, 2006, the Department of Corrections (DOC) received the *Public Agency Recycler of the Year* Award from the Washington State Recycling Association (WSRA).

The award recognizes DOC's sustainability efforts, particularly the 26 percent reduction in waste sent to the landfill in the last fiscal year. This reduction was achieved by recycling and composting. Facilities are recycling everything from paper to construction debris, including cans, bottles, textiles, pallets and scrap metal. The amount of materials recycled has increased at most of the facilities.

Composting is also on the increase: five of the fifteen correction centers are now composting food waste: Cedar Creek, Larch, Olympic and Clallam Bay Corrections Centers (which sends food waste to Olympic for composting) and the Washington State Penitentiary, which also composts yard waste from city residents. There are efforts underway to add food waste composting to more facilities in the future.

Facilities have also been successful at reducing their generation of hazardous waste. This has been accomplished through the work of chemical review committees, who assess the hazards posed by chemicals, and suggest safer alternatives whenever possible. All but two of the facilities are now small quantity generators of hazardous waste. This not only reduces the risk toxic chemicals pose to our health and environment, but also reduces time-consuming tracking required of staff.

Less waste means less money spent on disposal (savings on disposal costs are estimated at \$300,000 in the last fiscal year). Recycling and composting provides jobs for offenders and conserves natural resources on which we all depend.

The award was presented by Diana Perry, WSRA President, at the WSRA annual conference and awards banquet in Spokane. Staff from Airway Heights Corrections Center, as well as the statewide sustainability coordinator were in attendance to accept the award on behalf of ALL DOC staff across the state working hard to make DOC a sustainable agency. By honoring DOC with this award, WSRA provides both recognition of DOC's accomplishments and incentive to do even more.

(For more information on WSRA, go to www.wsra.net)